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THE TEACHING OF COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY

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We need some studies in high school which shall in some measure give the student a bird's-eye view of our industrial life. As it is now, in most cases the student finishes his high-school work with very little idea of the industrial life into which he is to go. The same argument that is urged for manual training may be applied to commercial geography. The industries have left the occupations of the home to be taken up in the factories. The boy and girl no longer have any opportunity to see these processes, yet, in order really to understand modern life they should have some knowledge of the great industries on which modern life depends.

It is the purpose of this paper to discuss a line of development which we have followed in the De Kalb Township High School in the past four years in working over the subject of commercial geography. Commercial geography, as taught in the past, while apparently giving the student a knowledge of industrial life, has not in reality done so. I think those who are familiar with it will agree that it has been largely a mass of statistics, grouped around cities and countries, with very little material that could be called interpretative of modern life. Yet the writer believes that commercial geography, rightly interpreted, could be made one of the most valuable studies in the curriculum and one that would be an aid to every student, whether preparing for college or for business.

The point of view of the old geography has been industry in relation to countries and not industry in relation to man. This is a fundamental difference, and changes the subject from one of statistics to a discussion of human needs and the way industry has developed to supply them. Secondly, commercial geography must discuss industrial processes as a unit; that is, by taking the

raw product and tracing its development until it becomes a finished product ready for the consumer. Lastly, commercial geography should discuss the conditions of labor in the various occupations, the opportunities for employment in them, and the pay that labor receives. This work will relate the study to the demand for vocational help and guidance.

We may criticize the present commercial geography in that it takes almost no account of man's social and intellectual needs. These surely demand some treatment in the study of modern life.

Let us consider briefly the needs of a man as shown in commerce. Commerce is determined by human needs and in high school should be discussed from this point of view. This we have tried to do in organizing the work in *De Kalb*. Commercial geography, when organized from a geographical point of view, loses its human interest and becomes mere facts and figures. The discussion of needs, however, makes it live and makes it worth while. The fundamental human needs are for what are called the subsistence wants; that is, for food, clothing, and shelter. Under the first head we should consider: first, cereals for their value as food, which measures man's need for them; then where they are grown and their preparation and the milling of them until they finally reach the consumer in the form of food. In the same way, meats would be considered in relation to their value as food; then in respect to stock raising, slaughtering, preparation for food, etc. In a similar manner would be taken up the important vegetable foods; then beverages, tea, coffee, and cocoa, and finally, what is very important in our day and yet has received almost no consideration in modern textbooks, the question of canned foods, their value as compared with fresh foods, their proper canning, possibility of decay and infection, etc.

It should be said that under all the preceding subdivisions the geographical side is considered. This, of course, is mentioned when the origin of the raw material is taken up. Similarly, the place of production of intermediate and finished products is considered; but this geographical side is only incidental to the more fundamental question of the supply of human needs and the adaptability of natural products through the work of man to meet his needs. In

like manner, as the last subdivision under each topic, as for instance, cereals or meats or stone quarrying, the condition of labor is studied, the number of men employed is taken up, and the pay of labor in its various grades is mentioned. The opportunities for advancement are also considered. This brings in the human element in relation to the individual pupil and makes him familiar with the great industrial processes on their human side. It also offers him some little basis for choosing intelligently an occupation.

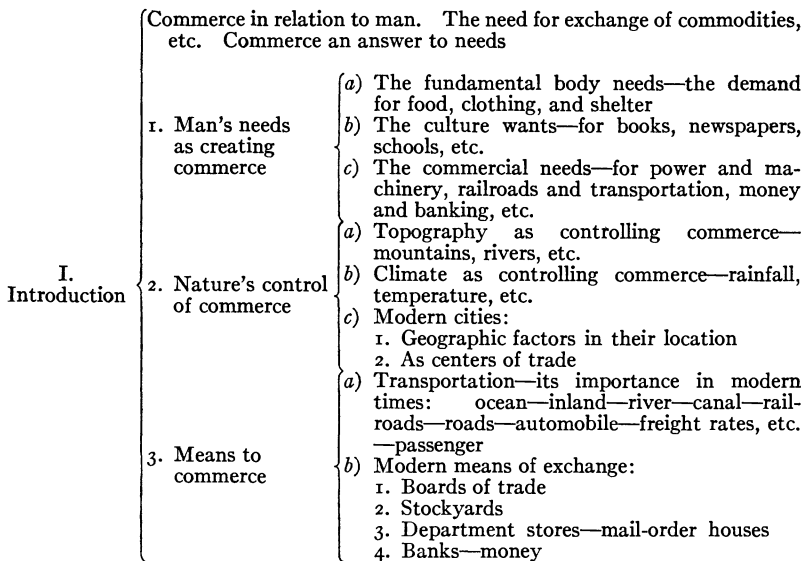
In a similar manner we take up the subdivisions under shelter, taking up the woods, stone, cement, brick, tile, glass, and metals, which are used in building. These topics are treated as units, tracing the product from the raw material to the finished product. As a subdivision under shelter, we consider internal furnishing of the house, the problems of furniture, carpets, rugs, and like articles being considered.

We consider the need for trained social service as exemplified in law, medicine, engineering, teaching, and government service, etc. As will be seen from the foregoing brief outline, we have broken away largely from the geographical basis of commercial geography and have substituted man and his needs as the center of our study.

The justification for doing this will be the greater value of the work to our students. This is to be decided, not entirely from theoretical reasons, but from the results in the classroom and the value after the student leaves school. We can speak with some degree of certainty on the first of these heads. Under the latter head, we shall have to wait for the pupil himself to express himself. We find the interest in the classroom is much greater when we consider commerce from the foregoing point of view. There is real human interest in the topics taken up and the needs studied seem to have a greater vitality than under the old method. Under our old method of teaching commercial geography, after a few general principles at the introduction were considered and after the novelty of the statistics had worn off, both class and teacher felt the subsequent work under that head to have little practical value. Teachers will find that their classes are interested in reorganizing the material in the text on the basis of this plan.

We are fairly convinced that something akin to this point of view must ultimately be introduced into the curriculum of the high school, some study that gives the student a fairly concrete idea of the great industrial processes which go to make up the world of business, and, on the other hand, gives him a definite idea of the human element involved in the labor which produces the commodity which he uses constantly, but of whose origin he has very little conception. I append herewith in diagrammatic form an outline of our course.

OUTLINE FOR TEACHING COMMERCIAL GEOGRAPHY



		The fundamental needs—food				
II. Foods	1. Cereals	{ a) Wheat—the bread supply for Europe and America. b) Rye—the bread supply for some people c) Corn—barley—oats	} Extent of market; importance as food, etc.			
				The farm—farm methods—farm opportunities		
				2. Vegetables	{ a) Potatoes b) Peas c) Beans	} Range of market, food value, etc.
	3. Animal Products	{ a) Beef b) Pork c) Mutton d) Milk and butter: inspection	} Animal husbandry—extent of market—food value Stockyard products—raising cattle—the ranges—the yards—retail—government inspection cleanliness—municipal			
				5. Sugar: cane—beet—molasses—food value		
				6. Condiments: spices, pepper, cinnamon, salt, etc.		
	7. Beverages	{ a) Tea b) Coffee c) Cocoa d) Beer e) Whiskey	} Where raised—preparation—value in diet			
				} Alcoholic—value in diet		
			8. Canned goods: canning processes—effect on modern home life			

		The following points may be taken up regarding those industries of the community in which students might seek to earn a living:	
III. Industries	1. Conditions of employment	Hours	
		Working conditions	
		Effect on worker, etc.	
	2. Number of persons employed		
	3. Opportunity in work for advancement		
	4. Pay of labor—social position		
	5. Preparation needed		

IV. Clothing	1. Textiles	{	a) Wool—how obtained—from sheep's back to cloth—character of fiber—amount used—in what climates, etc.	} I. Protection
			1. Spinning—processes—business industries, factories	
			2. Weaving	
			3. Dyeing—dye-stuffs	
			4. Making into clothes	
	2. Leather	{	5. Value as clothing	
			b) Cotton—how obtained—same as wool	
			c) Linen—how obtained—same as wool	
			d) Silk—how obtained—same as wool	
	3. Rubber: waterproofing—manufacture	{	a) Hides—from cattle to shoes	
			b) Shoes	
	4. Felt: hats			
	5.	{	a) Jewelry—gold and silver	} II. Adornment
			b) Laces	
			c) Feathers	

V. Shelter	1. House Construction	a) Woods	1. Hard	a) Oak	Forestry Logs Lumbering Mill work Forestry
				b) Maple	
			2. Soft	a) Pine	Forestry Logs Lumbering Mill work
		3. Value as building material and furniture			
		b) Metals:	1. Iron	Mining Smelting Use in buildings	
		c) Stone—quarrying—polishing	1. Granite	Value as building material	
			2. Limestone—marble		
		3. Sandstone			
		d) Cements	1. Importance as a building material		
2. Manufacture					
e) Brick and tile	Composition How made Importance of clays				
2. House Furnishings	2. House Furnishings	a) Furniture	Value of industry centers Hard and soft woods Manufacture		
			Carpet wool Fibers Paints Oils Colors		
		b) Carpets			
		c) Decorations			
		d) Paintings			
		a) Stoves			
b) Furnaces—how worked—extent of trade					
c) Hot water—how worked—extent of trade					
d) Steam					
a) Oil—kerosene—when discovered					
b) Gas—when discovered—how made					
c) Electricity—advantages					
d) Matches					
VI. Mining	1. Material found in earth's crust 2. Importance in industry of iron, copper, aluminum, clay, coal, etc. 3. Mining dangers, etc. (see Power)				
VII. Power Needs	1. Fuel	a) Coal	Mining Pumps Shafts Lifts		
		a) Steam	Steam engine Steam turbine Boilers		
		b) Electricity—advantages			
		c) Water power—importance			
		d) Machinery—lubricants			
e) Gas engine—importance—gasoline					
f) Flying machines					
3. Tools and machinery metals—importance in modern life					
4. Importance of steel in machinery					

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| VIII.
Social Needs | { 1. Communica-
tions | { (a) Telephone—importance—men employed
(b) Newspaper—printing—reporting
(c) Telegraph { 1. Wire
2. Wireless |
| | | { 2. Measurement of time—importance—watches and clocks |
| | | { 3. Amusements |
| | { 4. The automobile | |
| | { 5. Hotels | |
| | { 6. See the "Profession" for further social needs | |
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| IX.
Mental and
Aesthetic
Needs | { 1. Books | { (a) Paper { Food pulp
Linen pulp
Importance in arts and science
(b) Printing { The mechanics
The art
(c) Binding | |
| | | { 2. Writing
materials | { (a) Inks—source
(b) Pencils—source |
| | | { 3. Art | { (a) Pictures
(b) Sculpture
(c) Architecture, etc. |
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| X.
The Profes-
sions—
service.
Need for
Trained Serv-
ice in Society | { 1. Law—bench and bar work in the community |
| | { 2. Medicine |
| | { 3. Teaching { Importance of professions |
| | { 4. Engineering { Numbers |
| | { 5. Government service { Opportunities |
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| XI.
Arts of War | { 1. Powder |
| | { 2. Dynamite |
| | { 3. Explosives |
| | { 4. Guns |
| | { 5. Cannon |
- XII. Competition of nation with nation
- XIII. Free trade versus tariff

Some useful reference books for work along this line are: Yeats, four volumes, a mine of information, treats from this view-point; Symonds, *Animal Products*; Crookes, *The Wheat Problem*; Chesholm, *Commercial Geography*; magazine articles on business.